1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32
Hill Maria
Bison Horn Maria

the Marias of the Abujhmar hills abstaining. The tribes converged on Jagdalpur, the Diwan who had been touring in the South fleeing into the Chanda district. A half battalion of regular Panjabi troops and large detachments of armed Central Provinces police soon suppressed and disarmed the rebels. A few ringleaders who had been guilty of cruel murders of isolated State officials were hanged, and several hundred men flogged, a punishment really more humane for such primitive men than imprisonment. Lal Kalendra Singh and a few of his associates were banished. The Raja was deprived of his powers, and an experienced Englishman, Mr. James May, appointed Diwan. The rebellion had been marked by keen hostility towards the immigrant exploiters, and a movement to keep Bastar for Bastaris. *Pari passu* with the punishment of the rebels, full enquiry was made into their undoubted grievances, and stern action taken against their oppressors. From 1910 till the Raja's death in 1921 the State was under virtual Government management; it has since then been under direct management, owing to the minority and the subsequent illness of the late Maharani.[1]

Save, therefore, for the short period 1908-10 the State has virtually been under Government management since 1886. Great progress has been made in developing communications. The Godavari navigation scheme referred to in the quotation above from Glasfurd's report was abandoned in 1871 after the works on the first barrier at Dummagudem in the present East Godavari district of Madras had been completed and much money had been spent on the works at the second barrier, where the river forms the boundary between Bastar and Hyderabad. This must be one of the very few great engineering works abandoned uncompleted by the British in India, defeated by the fever and sweltering heat of the valley, the difficulty of recruiting labour, lack of funds and the improbability of an adequate return for the great cost; and there are few more desolate sights than the vast ruins of the half-finished anicut, lock-gates and guard-walls that still resist the annual floods of this mighty river, and in the dry weather stand gaunt and futile in the baking wilderness of rocks and sands in which the united Godavari and Indrawati there lose themselves. With the transference of the Political Agency for Bastar from Sironcha to Raipur, all idea of the Godavari as the base-line for its communications was abandoned. Emphasis was placed on linking the north of the State with the main Nagpur-Calcutta railway line by roads from Raipur and Rajnandgaon to Jagdalpur, and the Vizagapatam Agency road from Salur

[1] The hereditary title of the Ruling Chief of Bastar was raised from Raja to Maharaja in 1932.

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32

rail-head below the Eastern Ghat mountains to Jeypore and the Bastar border was continued thence to Jagdalpur; subsequently roads have gradually been driven westward to Dantewara, Bijapur, Kutru and Bhopalpatnam, and southward to Sukma and Konta; the most recent development has been many miles of forest roads, constructed either as feeder roads to the Raipur and Rajnandgaon roads, or to link up the forests of Dantewara and the south with the Godavari at Tarlagudam, Cherla and Dummagudam or the Kolab-Sabari at Mismagudam and Konta. The Raipur road is now motorable throughout the year, and there is a daily mail and passenger service by it to Kanker and Dhamtari. A railway connexion with the new Raipur-Vizianagram line has been surveyed, and would have been under construction but for the world-wide financial depression. The revenue of the State has risen from about Rs. 30,000 in 1855, then received in kind or in cowry shells at a rate of 2,880 to the rupee, to well over a million rupees.

So the old order is doomed; and with the motor-bus abroad in the land and scores of aboriginals every month seeking work on the public works of the State, in the Assam tea gardens or in the towns of the Godavari valley, with the railway administration feeling this last great blank of 300 miles from Raipur to Salur by 250 from Titlagarh in Kalahandi State to Singareni in Hyderabad a slur to be removed as soon as funds permit, change comes ever faster. My successors and I, like our predecessors, are guilty of accelerating change; but we can on the one hand plead that when we came a return to the old isolation was not practical politics, and on the other that we have tried before it was too late to strengthen and revive the old tribal *panchayat* organization and restore its jurisdiction in civil and in all but serious criminal offences, to check the drunkenness made rampant by a bad excise system, to prevent the further bestowal of aboriginal villages on alien *thekadars* (lessees) and to make the post of village headman one of honour and responsibility instead of one to be held reluctantly by some dummy with no influence in the village, to abolish *bisaha*, to deprive village lessees of the right of taking forced labour, to minimize the right of officials to take it and to regulate the still necessary State demands for road and other labour so as to inconvenience the cultivator as little as possible, to see that it is paid for, and to abolish bondservice. Much of great interest could be written on the effects and reactions of the administrative measures of the last fifty years sketched in these last few pages. But the purpose of this book is to place on record while there is yet time an account of the way of life prevalent among the Maria tribes of Bastar, perhaps now the most primitive

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32
Hill Maria
Bison Horn Maria

PLATE I

131
133
491

BASTAR STATE—NATURAL DIVISIONS
Scale (approx.): 1 inch = 32 miles

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32

plateau from Antagarh tahsil. The northern half of this north-eastern plateau is Kondagaon tahsil, and the southern Jagdalpur. The height of the plateau varies from 2,500 or 2,400 feet at its northern and southern edges to about 1,800 feet near Jagdalpur. It is a region of evergreen forests, with the beautiful sal (*Shorea robusta*) as its characteristic tree. The temperature seldom exceeds 104° in the summer, and at Jagdalpur descends to 40° in the winter, while hoar frosts are not uncommon in the forests. Kondagaon tahsil is under-developed and jungly, much of it and Antagarh having been comparatively recently settled by Gond immigrants from Chhattisgarh. Jagdalpur, on the other hand, has miles of excellent rice cultivation in its extensive open plains, and is the only heavily populated part of the State, except adjacent parts of Dantewara. On its south-eastern and southern edges, however, it has hilly country heavily forested or inhabited by primitive Parjas and Bison-horn Marias.

The north-west corner of the State is the Antagarh tahsil. The north of this is a continuation of the Chhattisgarh-Kanker plain 800 or 900 feet above sea-level, bounded on the west and north by the Chanda and Drug districts of the Central Provinces and by Kanker State. This plain, the second main natural division of Bastar, is reached from Keskal and north Kondagaon through the Amabera *pargana*, which, though on the 2,000 feet plateau, is in Antagarh, by a forest road descending the steep Matlaghat by a recently re-aligned and easily-graded descent. The main road from Jagdalpur and Kondagaon through Antagarh to Rajnandgaon rail-head enters the tahsil in the Benur *pargana* on the 2,000 feet plateau and descends 200 or 300 feet to Narainpur which, with the adjacent *parganas* of Kurangal, Dugal, Baragaon, Ghat Jhorian and Bare Jhorian, as well as Benur and the lowland or 'Kalpatti' villages of Chhote Dongar *pargana*, are an intermediate stage between the true 2,000 feet plateau and the plain of north Antagarh. The inhabitants are mostly what were called by Glasfurd and other early writers Jhorias, in appearance scarcely distinguishable from the Marias of the Abujhmar hills, with similar dancing dress, and customs similar, but considerably modified by sojourn in the lowlands and contact with other tribes. From Narainpur a forest road runs westward along the Nei Bherat valley to Sonpur, with an extension thence to Paralkot and Maroda, where it meets another forest road that comes westward from Taroki on the Narainpur-Antagarh road across the north Antagarh plain. The Sonpur, Paralkot and Paralkot-Kalpatti *parganas* are really lowland *parganas* in the middle of highland Maria *parganas*, and the two latter belong properly speaking to the north Antagarh plain. The

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32

133 Sonpur *pargana*, however, has many Hill Maria villages, and a sprinkling of Halbas and 'Jhorias'.

[491] The road from Narainpur to Antagarh descends the Raoghat near Aturbera village between a spur of the Abujhmar mass of hills 2,938 feet in height and the Matlaghat hills, down the sal-clad valley of a stream that drains into the Kotri river. The Antagarh plain has the 'Muria' *parganas* of Antagarh, Kolar, Surebahi, Bomra, Kirangal, Kalpatti, and Bandadesh, besides Paralkot and Paralkot-Kalpatti already mentioned.

The third great natural division of the State is the Abujhmar mountain mass. Roughly speaking, this is composed of all the wild hill country bounded on the south by the Indrawati, on the north by the Antagarh plain, on the east by the Jhoria country described above and the Gudra valley from Chhota Dongar to Mangnar near the Indrawati and Barsur, and on the west by the Kotri river from Partabpur to its junction with the Indrawati at Bhamragarh in the Ahiri zamindari of the Chanda district. This tangle of hills is roughly rectangular, but at its north-eastern corner throws two great spurs into the Antagarh plain by Raoghat (already mentioned) and Kolar, and at its north-western corner projects a bastion of hill almost to the Kotri valley between Partabpur and Koilibera. The north-eastern spurs are now in the Matla State Forest, but the north-western bastion has as its northern face the Padalibhum *pargana*, with the Tapalibhum and Nurbhum *parganas* to the side and south of this, all three occupied by Hill Marias. The hill mass is so cracked and seamed with valleys running in all directions, that it is not possible to point out any main hill systems; the only clues that help to a conception of its features are the watersheds. The northern slopes drain into the Bastar branch of the Kotri, and the north-western into the main Kotri after the junction of the Drug-Kanker and Bastar branches. Below this, the great trough of the Nei Bherat valley cleaves the mountains from Narainpur on the north-eastern edge westward for thirty-five miles through Sonpur into the Nurbhum *pargana*, where it turns south-west through the Behramar *pargana* and the Chanda Hill Maria country to Bhamragarh. The watershed dividing this from the streams that flow into the Gudra runs roughly south-west from the north-western corner of the Hukkagotal *pargana* just south of the Nei Bherat valley along a line of crests to Kutul village in Bardal *pargana*, thence south to Dhurbera, the village of the headman of the Farsal *pargana*, and slightly east of south from there to Adeq in Chhota Dongar Mar *pargana*. From the hills between Dhurbera and Adeq some smaller streams flow south-west direct into the Indrawati. From the crests running first eastwards

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32
Hill Maria
Bison Horn Maria

133 slopes and in the Mangnar and Dantewara Mar villages there are often fine patches of sal and other evergreen trees. On the hill-tops and on slopes exhausted by shifting cultivation, high grass and stunted trees make the country monotonous to the eye and tiring through lack of shade. Where the slopes are newly cleared and have once been burnt for shifting *penda* cultivation, often a small grove of trees is left on the summit, like nothing so much as the top-knot of hair on the crown of a Maria's otherwise roughly-shaved head. But the moment you descend off the rocky plateaux you meet green glades and hurrying streams, or may feel the sudden amaze of a prospect such as that of the blue apex of the lofty Bailadila ridge seen beyond the haze of the Indrawati valley down the valley of a stream that far below the ridge between Itulnar and Hikul races due south to the Indrawati.

161 There are only between 150 and 160 villages inhabited in all this area of about 1,500 square miles, and there are only 11,500 361 Hill Marias. This means one village in every ten square miles, and less than eight persons to the square mile. In few places can you lose yourself in such solitudes.

635 North Bastar thus consists administratively of the Antagarh, Kondagaon and Jagdalpur tahsils, half of the Jagdalpur tahsil being south of the Indrawati, and of the portions of the Kutru and Bhopalpatnam zamindaris and the Dantewara tahsil north of the Indrawati.

635 In South Bastar there are the Dantewara, Bijapur and Konta tahsils, and the Sukma, Kutru, Bhopalpatnam and Kotapalli-
●491 Pamer zamindaris; these four zamindaris alone survive out of the seventeen or eighteen of old times. A great western road runs 134 miles from Jagdalpur through Gidam, Karli, Matawara, Bijapur and Bhopalpatnam to Timer on the Indrawati, opposite Patagudam in Chanda district, whence there is a forest road to Sironcha; branches south from Gidam and Karli run to Dantewara, with a further extension to Kameli at the foot of the Bailadila hills; north from Gidam to Barsur, and from Matawara to Kutru; and south from Bhopalpatnam to Tarlagudam on the Godavari and thence over the Latpatkandi pass into the Nugur and Albaka taluqs of Madras. A great southern road runs 114 miles from Jagdalpur to Sukma and Konta. A network of forest roads of recent construction links these roads together between Tirathgarh in Jagdalpur tahsil, Katakalian, Kuakonda and Dantewara, or southward from Kuakonda to the Kolab-Sabari at Misma on the Konta road, and to Konta via the Aranpur pass, Jaggergonda and Golapalli; while Bijapur is linked to Cherla and Jaggergonda to Dummagudam, both on the Godavari. With these and other

I: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32

forest roads there are now few places in south Bastar out of reach of a motor-car, in the fair weather.

Dantewara tahsil is a horseshoe plain between the Tangri Dongri ghats at the edge of Jagdalpur tahsil on the east, the Abujhmar mountains on the north, and the great sword-blade north and south ridge of Bailadila on the west. Its general level is about 400 feet below that of the Jagdalpur tahsil, and it is an intermediate step between the north-eastern plateau and the great plains of South Bastar. The main road descends steeply to it from Killepal and Bastanar. This Dantewara valley may almost be regarded as the fourth natural division of Bastar; though small portions of the east of Kutru zamindari and the north of Bijapur tahsil are on the same level, there is between them and Dantewara tahsil the great barrier of the Bailadila ridge, except where the narrow Indrawati valley separates the northern end of the ridge from the Abujhmar mountains.

The rest of Bastar is sometimes described as one great southern plain varying in level from 600 to 300 feet according to the proximity of the Godavari. Actually, however, there is yet another plateau to be crossed on the western road (and on its forest branches that strike off towards the Godavari) before the traveller descends on to the real Godavari plain. Its level varies from 1,100 to 900 feet (leaving out of account, in this as in all the plateaux and plains of Bastar, the frequent spurs and isolated hills). On the southern road to Konta, and on the forest roads descending from Dantewara to Konta tahsil and Sukma zamindari by the Aranpur, Koriras and Mokpal passes, on the other hand, the traveller gets at once off the northern 2,000 feet plateau, in the case of the southern road, and off the Dantewara valley level in those of the forest roads, to the Godavari or southern plain. This intermediate western plateau may be regarded as the fifth natural division, and called the Kutru-Bijapur plateau. On the north and north-west the Indrawati is its boundary, so far as Bastar is concerned, as far as the hills which begin north of Desli in Sironcha tahsil and cross the Indrawati into Bastar to form the boundary of the Kutru and Bhopalpatnam zamindaris; the gorge in which the Indrawati boils through these hills, the last barrier to its union with the Godavari, is sinister in its magnificence. The hills run thence south-west along the border of the two zamindaris, cross the western road a little west of Bijapur village and continue south-west to the Isalnar pass on the Nelasnar-Cherla forest road, and thence westward till they merge with the foot-hills at the southern end of the Bailadila ridge, a little north of the Aranpur pass.

This Kutru-Bijapur plateau comprises all Kutru zamindari

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32
Hill Maria

CHAPTER VI

VILLAGES, HOUSES AND THEIR CONTENTS

A. Hill Maria Villages, Houses and their Contents

361 THE site of the Hill Maria village is in these days almost entirely determined by its convenience as a centre from which to cultivate the *penda* slopes of the year. Peace has reigned in the Abujhmar hills from time immemorial and no question of defence arises when a village is built. A possible relic of former unsettled times [349] is the custom of building stone cairns and seats as look-outs at the head of passes or the summits of hills on the paths leading to villages; but these are convenient watching places for herdsmen when their cattle are grazing around the hill-tops, and serve also to mark the line of the paths which, in the rains, are overgrown with rank grass, or fall into disuse when villages or *penda* slopes 487 are abandoned for alternative sites. Certain well-defined tracks through the hills are cleared annually by the villagers; these often avoid the actual village sites, to which side tracks connect them. There are no carts in the hills, and therefore the tracks are only foot-paths, generally wide enough only for a party to walk in single file, though at the periodic clearings the grass is cut down to a width of two or three feet on each side of the path. The village 361 boundary is usually marked by a cairn of stones, in the centre of which may be planted a pole ornamented at the top with bunches of grass or peacock or jungle-cock feathers, the pole being further adorned by peeling off bands of bark at intervals throughout its length. The boundary itself is usually a stream, and the cairns of the two villages are usually twenty or thirty yards apart, so that [783] when the annual *pira-manska* (called by the Bison-horn Marias *rog-burria* and by Halbi-speakers *boharani*) ceremony of ridding the village of disease takes place, the old winnowing-fans with the sweepings of each house can be hung up beyond the boundary on this no-man's-land without leaving them on the lands of the neighbouring village.

487 These paths cross streams by stepping-stones, by logs felled across the stream, by small raised embankments pierced by hollowed 491 tree trunk pipes for the passage of the water and revetted with horizontally laid logs, or by bridges consisting of a plank supported by bamboo wicker-work cylinders filled with boulders resting on

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32
Hill Maria

the bed of the stream; these are held in position between upright poles set V-wise in the boulders, to which are fastened horizontal bamboo poles as railings. As they have no saws, the 'plank' is a tree trunk with one side trimmed flat with the axe. Even more elaborate bridges are sometimes made at high levels over streams liable to flood, from tree-fork to tree-fork on opposite banks.

Though, as has been said above, agricultural conditions nowadays determine village sites, hill-tops or rocky slopes remain favourite sites, and become commoner as you penetrate farther into the Abujhmar hills. The traditional arrangement is a street some twenty-five yards wide between parallel lines of long-houses; at one end of the street is the *gotul-lon* or village dormitory, generally within a rounded bamboo fence, and sometimes in front of this dormitory will be seen the *udam-garia* or seat of honour of the *kasyeq-gaita* and possibly also of the secular headman (*gaita* or *peda*), as well as the stones on which the other village elders sit around with them in conclave; but the *udam-garia* custom is not found in all parts of the hills. Sometimes the shrine of the *Nar-Talughi* or Village Mother is actually inside the dormitory fencing, and she is often housed there for a while when a village is being shifted. There are, as a rule, no *bari* (vegetable gardens) attached to each house as amongst most Gonds, including the Bison-horn Marias and the Murias of Bastar; but sometimes the *kasyeq-gaita* has a small tobacco *bari* attached to the dormitory in the centre of the main street. The *Gazetteer* (p. 50) speaks of the 'common granary' as standing in the broad street; but with one partial exception, Nugur village in Kutru Mar in the Indrawati valley, I have never seen this. The villagers generally construct a row of granaries (*mauda* or *wijja-dodi*) on piles at the side or rear of the main village street, sometimes nearer the *penda* fields than the village; this row can hardly be called a 'common granary', as each villager has his own granary in the row for his own private food and seed store, the granaries being built together only for convenience, as they can then be watched at night by one watchman for the whole village, sleeping in a special hut at the side of the granaries or under a granary. At Nugur there were big matting bins in the main street in which all the rice seed of the village was stored; but here the village had come under the economic thraldom of some Teli tradesmen, who for years had advanced rice to the cultivators. The bins were left in the collective charge of the headman and elders, and any villager could help himself to seed on the understanding that at harvest he would replace it with 50 per cent. interest, the Teli owners being also free to remove the surplus from time to time.

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
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Hill Maria
Bison Horn Maria

343 841 that there was no custom of segregating menstruating girls or women.

There is in every Bison-horn village a *paik-gotul* or lodging-hut 342 for State officials, but I have never seen a *gotul-ton* dormitory for bachelors. I was once told that there are such dormitories in a few big villages such as Ghotpal, Karli, Tumnar, Massenar and Dugeli, but could not find one in these villages; nor did the State officials who gathered information for me in various parts of the Bison-horn country ever report their existence. The *padas* (headmen) and *parmas* (village priests) whom I saw at Aranpur and other camps stated that such dormitories were a degraded institution found only among Hill Marias and Murias. They are not mentioned by Madras writers on the Koyas and Dorlas.

361 Bison-horn villages are not found on the tops of hills and isolated spurs like Hill Maria villages. They are located in positions convenient for communications, water supply or cultivation, like lowland villages in all countries. Many of them, especially in [487] the Jagdalpur tahsil, have cart tracks leading to them, though these 443 are used mainly by the Hindu and Mohammedan traders who bring their wares to the various weekly markets already established in their bigger villages. Though, however, some Bison-horn Marias [492] have carts, and more keep cattle and do not always leave it to the Rawat herdsman servant to milk them, while many use ploughs, yet the majority of them still think it not the thing for Koitor to drive carts, or that they could never manage them; and there are, therefore, very many villages approachable only by footpaths. ● [491] They make bridges very similar to those of the Hill Marias, often on a more elaborate scale.

361 The only Bison-horn Maria village where I could find memory 787 of a fairly recent shifting was Bare Gudra, in the Kuakonda *pargana* of Dantewara tahsil. My informant was Kartami Mukka, the old village priest (*perma*) of the village, who said that when he was young the village was settled in the now abandoned Mundi *padar* (village site); there was heavy mortality from epidemic and epizootic outbreaks for some years, and a series of crop failures. Then the eggs in his father's house began always to get addled, and his father, the *perma*, interpreting this as a final intimation that the village had to be shifted, called up the elders to see the eggs, and they agreed that the village must be shifted. They had then, on a Monday, Wednesday or Friday, to go at noon with the *perma* to select the *padar* for the new village; and to test the omens at the new *padar* the *perma* dug a small hole in the ground. In the first hole he found a root growing across the hole, and so changed to another position

Shifting villages 166

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32
Hill Maria
Bison Horn Maria

beginning to use carts, but many villages still keep Rawats to tend and milk their cattle and manufacture ghee. They are inveterate eaters of beef, not only at funeral ceremonies or when raising a stone for the dead, but at *pandum* ceremonies, family or clan gatherings, the completion of a new tank and similar occasions. Most villages have a rocky place set apart for skinning and eating cattle. They are reluctant to kill and eat only their own cattle; on the borders of the Jagdalpur Muria country, especially at the time of the *pandum*, they often attempt to steal young heifers or calves from the nearest Muria or non-Muria village: I had once to impose a collective fine on the villagers of Nennor for hiring two men who had been convicted for two or three former thefts to go to the Muria village of Erokot and steal a bullock, which was the mainstay of the Nennor new-eating feast.

Hill and Bison-horn Marias keep tame dogs and cats, and the dogs of the latter are often well-trained hunting dogs who will go with their masters in a beat without giving tongue.

Dogs and cats Bison-horn Marias coax a dog to them by calling '*Durro*,[1] *durro!*' and a cat (*pusali*) by '*Mini*,[1] *mini!*' while '*Darra, darra!*' is used for driving a dog off.

Other pets Bison-horn Marias occasionally keep parrots and bulbuls, and some of them use hawks for catching quail and other small birds.

D. Fishing

All Marias make their own rods of bamboo and lines of *kosa* silk; the hooks are generally in these days bought in the markets, but occasionally thorns are said to be used. They use rods only in the rains, and bait their hooks with worms or with *konda*, a paste of rice chaff.

The Kuruk or Jaralur are the Maria fishing caste of the big river valleys, speaking the Gondi dialect of the neighbouring villages. The Kuruks of the Indrawati valley from Nelasnar to Bhamragarh are scarcely distinguishable from the Hill Marias in appearance and customs, but the Hill Marias look down on them and do not allow inter-marriage; like those of potters and blacksmiths, their houses are carefully segregated from Maria houses. They maintain ferry services in their dug-out canoes on the Indrawati, and are paid an annual retainer in grain by the Hill Maria villages which frequent Gidam, Nelasnar, Bhairamgarh and Kutru

[1] I have since heard *Durro* and *Mini* used in the same way not only by Gonds but by Korkus also in the Hoshangabad district of the Central Provinces.

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32
Hill Maria
Bison Horn Maria

the *Sendhias* and the zamindars also denied it. The allegation possibly arises from the fact that the zamindar appoints or confirms the succession of the *Sendhia*, and may arbitrate in a case involving parties from the *patti* of two or more *Sendhias*. Moreover the zamindars themselves have probably often descended from the tribal headmen of old, and so it is easy for them to perform the function of ultimate arbitration in social matters which is so characteristic of the chiefs of the ancient semi-feudal organization of the province from whom they descend or derive. Obviously it would be easy to apply to all the Chanda Maria country the Bastar *panchayat* system.[1]

From Jarawandi our route took us six miles to Pendri, the largest village and virtual headquarters of Jharapapra zamindari, thence six miles to Jharapapra and back; on fifteen miles to Aundhi in Drug district, and thence seven miles to Murumgaon, the headquarters of the Chanda zamindari of that name; the last mile was at long last on made road, the third-class road running east from Garchiroli through Khutgaon, Dudhmala, Dhanora, Rangi, Murumgaon and Koracha zamindaris to Dondi-Lohara and Drug. We were, however, to have trouble on this road next day, when heavy rain flooded unbridged streams between Murumgaon and the twenty miles distant Manpur, the *de facto* headquarters of the Koracha zamindari of Drug. The very long delay in bridging this road and raising it in class is only too typical of the neglect by Government and District Councils of aboriginal areas.

Similarly the District Council had not opened a single school in Jharapapra zamindari. The late zamindar, a Halba by tribe, and amongst the most intelligent and progressive landholders of the two districts, had opened a private school at Pendri[2] which at the time of my visit was being run by a Gondi-speaking teacher of the Marar agricultural caste, and his pupils were six Marar, six Halba and two Pardhan boys. Marias and Halbas are the chief elements in the small population of the zamindari, dwindling steadily by the drift in recent years of Marias across into Bastar for the sake of *podu*.

All along this route there had been frequent pockets of Marar cultivators, especially near the streams. These industrious, progressive, dark-skinned agricultural pioneers have pushed up the valley of every substantial river in the backward areas of Balaghat, Bhandara, Chanda, Drug, Raipur and doubtless other aboriginal districts of the Central Provinces. They have been the chief factor in such increase as there has been of permanent, especially irrigated, cultivation in these Garchiroli and Drug Partially Excluded Areas.

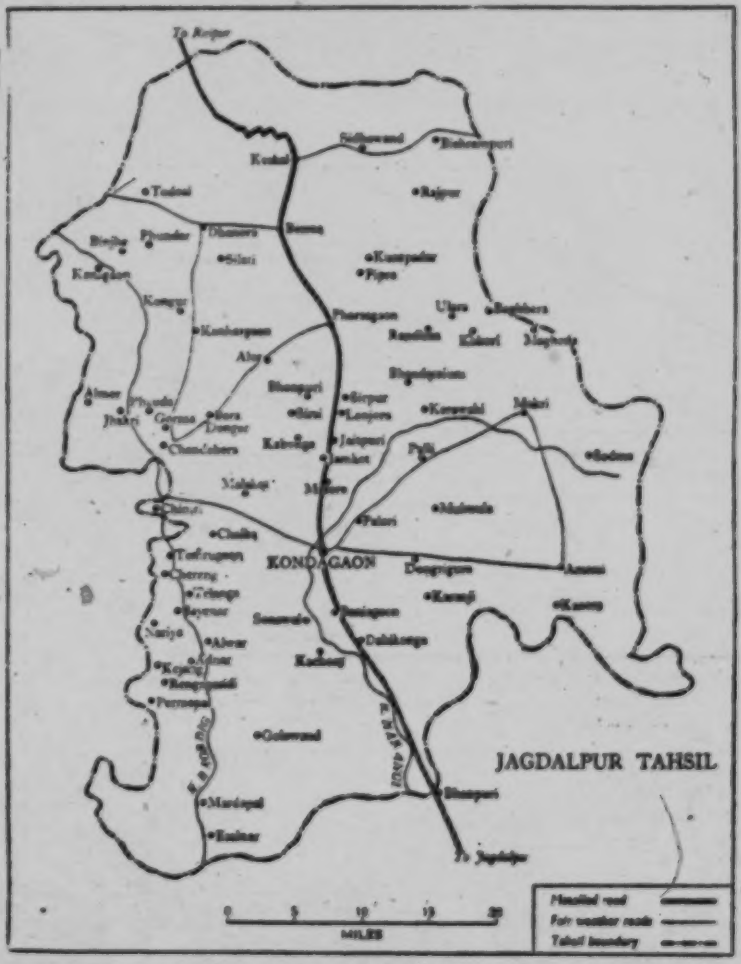
[1] See pp. 295-7.
[2] *Ordnance Survey of India*, Sheet 64D, ref. M(1922)

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
Muria

THE MURIA AND THEIR GHOTUL

133 These are the main features of the Kondagaon Tahsil: a main road,
● 491 open all the year round and vibrating day and night to the rumble of lorries
connecting the capital with the greater world. A high plateau, broken by
one range of hills running north from Bara Dongar and to the south and east.

[131
491]



KONDAGAON TAHSIL

Two main rivers and many streams. Forest everywhere, mainly sal forest, green all the year. Four fair-weather roads; one east from Keskal along the northern border to Bishrampuri and on into Jeypore and the Likma Forest

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
Muria

INTRODUCTION

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Railway; another from Kondagaon itself round the Makri Reserved Forest, a hunter's paradise. A third goes west from Berma to Antagarh, skirting the south of the Telinghat Hills. A fourth and most important connects the two tahsil headquarters of Kondagaon and Narayanpur.

There are no towns and few important villages. Kondagaon itself has a court with a First Class Magistrate, a police-station, dispensary, middle school, forest, excise and revenue offices and a headquarters of a timber company, a few shops, and an important bi-weekly bazaar. Thousands of Muria visit the place for the Marhai festival in March. There is only one other police-station, at Keskal, an important village at the head of the pass leading down to the lowlands. There are schools here and at Baniagaon, Mardapal, Pharasgaon and Bara Dongar. Bara Dongar is a beautiful village with important Hindu temples and a special connexion with the Maharaja, who is ceremonially enthroned here, when a smaller version of the royal Dasaera festival is observed every year.

The population of the Kondagaon Tahsil in 1941 was 111,428. The area is 1880 square miles. It has 521 villages, of which 23 are deserted. In 1942 I counted 278 ghotul in the tahsil, but this figure is probably an underestimate.

The headquarters of the western tahsil have recently been moved from Antagarh to Narayanpur. The Narayanpur Tahsil is much larger than Kondagaon, being 2885 square miles, but its population is only 62,305. It has 831 villages, of which however only 565 are inhabited. In 1942 there were about 244 Muria ghotul. The tahsil has much more character and diversity than Kondagaon and it is not easy to describe. It will be most convenient to follow its roads.

From Berma on the main Keskal-Jagdalpur road, there branches a forest road through heavily-wooded and attractive country to Amabera and thence to Antagarh. In its course the road passes the village of Penjori at the edge of the high plateau: two miles away at the end of a path winding through magnificent trees and wild mountain scenery is the famous shrine of Lingo at Semurgaon. Thence the road begins an abrupt descent down the Matlaghat to the Antagarh plain. Unhappily a fringe of trees and tall bamboos, as nearly everywhere in Bastar, hides the view from the traveller's eyes. At the foot of the mountains the road is only 900 feet above sea-level and has reached the northern plain which is simply a continuation southward of the Chhattisgarh-Kanker lowlands. Here is Antagarh, the old administrative centre of the tahsil, where there is still a large bazaar, a police-station and a school. The population of this area is very mixed, for the Muria are influenced both by the wild Maria of the hills and the sophisticated Gond of the lowlands. There are many immigrants from British India.

From Antagarh runs a beautiful road to Narayanpur. On the right are hills of vitrified sandstone that glow pink like dolomite rocks in the evening sun, and half-way along the road climbs the magnificent Raughat between the Abujhmar and Matlaghat Hills. In the woods on either side are charming Muria villages, Padbera, Aturbera, Phulpar and many others.

Narayanpur itself is a very large village not yet grown into a town. It is fresh and open, surrounded by hills in the near distance. Near by is Binjhli among its great mango groves and palms.

From Narayanpur roads go west, south and east. The western road is one of the loneliest and most exciting in Bastar. After passing the Halba centre of Soupur, it forces its way into the very heart of the Abujhmar through wild and majestic scenery, and on to Paralkot and Partabpur. Here is the

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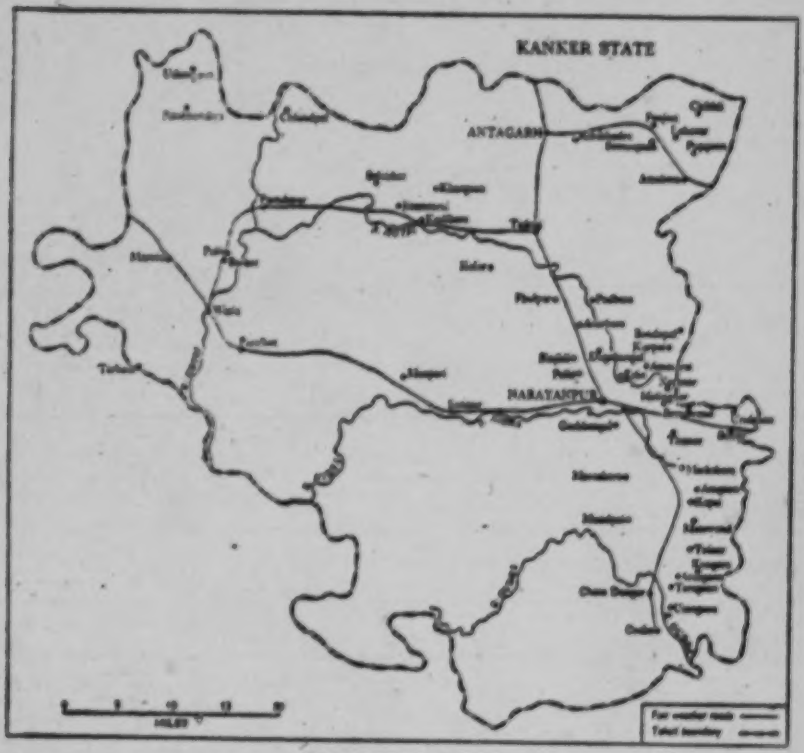
most striking landmark of all Bastar, the great mass of the Abujhmar Mountains, an impregnable fortress, wild, lonely, exalted, exhilarating, home of the Hill Maria. To the west of the mountains, in sharp and striking contrast, is one of the most 'civilized' areas of Bastar, the north-western plain, where the ghotul still flourishes, but a little shyly, and the children have none of the decorations that make their fellows to the south such a delight to see.



NARAYANPUR TAHSIL

The road curves round at Partabpur and runs east back to Antagarh. For a great part of its journey it runs near and parallel to the beautiful Kotri river. The Kotri, which has its source in the Raughat and Matlaghat Hills, flows west through Koilibera to meet another river of the same name that comes down through Kanker from Drug. They meet near Partabpur and travel on together through the Muria tracts of the extreme west into Sironcha, until at last they join the Indrawati at Bhairamgarh. This is the river that makes glad the heart of the Muria of the north-west. It is a lovely river, wide and open, with glorious sands, and every now and then a glimpse of distant mountains. Some of the happiest days of my life have been spent on its banks.'

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
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South and east of Narayanpur is the true Jhoria country, home of the most charming and friendly people in Bastar. Between Narayanpur and Chota Dongar, the villages of the Abujhmar foothills, Kapsi, Markabera, Metawand, Kongera are probably Hill Maria in origin. Beyond Chota Dongar a road goes up into the real Maria country and Orcha village, passing through the wonderful Marian gorge, where the Gudra river emerges through enormous wooded rocks out of the hills.

THE PARGANAS OF THE NARAYANPUR TAHSIL

The area east of the Antagarh-Narayanpur road is equally attractive. Here are the villages of Nayanar, Bandopal, Almer and Jhakri which frequently appear in this book. The country is well-wooded and hilly, more varied and beautiful than the Kondagaon Tahsil into which it leads. The old Hindu centre of Bénur is near the road half-way between the two tahsils.

I have spoken throughout of roads, for they provide a convenient means of finding places on a map, and actually divide up the two northern tahsils very well. But it should not be supposed that these roads are great highways of traffic. Except for the Keskal-Jagdalpur road, not one of them is open during the rains. Several cannot be used by cars before December. The roads are important as agents of culture-change, however, because along them come the slow-moving trains of bullock-wagons, the ever-touring chaprasi and constable, the merchant on his laden horse. These are not, of course, confined to the official roads; the inter-village communications of north Bastar

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491 are excellent, and there are few places to which a bullock-cart and even a car cannot be taken with a little care.

631 Although the Muria area is divided officially into the two tahsils I have described, the people themselves think much more in terms of the smaller administrative unit, the pargana, the Manjhi or Chief of which is the court of appeal in all tribal disputes. The parganas of Narayanpur are clearly defined blocks of territory with considerable homogeneity of custom and fashion within their borders. But in Kondagaon, the parganas are very broken up. The Keskal, Kongur, Chalka and Mardapal Parganas are well defined, but the Hatiya and Sonawal Parganas, to name no others, are scattered all over the tahsil, and it must be hard for the Pargana Manjhi to exercise any sort of control over the area in his charge.

It has always been a tradition of the State to allow the village panchayats, which we may call judicial committees of village elders, to have jurisdiction over most tribal offences with a final appeal to the Maharaja. Since 1932 the jurisdiction of the village courts has been greatly extended to include cases of simple hurt and assault, minor thefts, mischief, trespass, adultery and enticement. They can also settle civil claims up to a value of twenty-five rupees. The Pargana Manjhi are not personally members of these courts, but to them lies any appeal from their findings. These men, who have the privilege of wearing red turbans, are a useful link between the aboriginals and the Administration. Though some of them abuse their position and tend to divert fines to their own use, they are on the whole a first-rate body of men, and their friendship is invaluable to the investigator.

The tradition of local self-government, so firmly established in the State, is an important factor in the conditions that make the ghotul and its organization and discipline possible.

II. The Tribal Population of Bastar

101 The tribal population of Bastar is varied and interesting. In order to simplify my description I will adopt the names given to the tribes by Grigson, though it must be remembered that, convenient though these often are, they are not always the names used by the people themselves.

The Hill Maria are the least influenced by the outside world and have retained most of their religious and cultural institutions. They live in the [167] Abujhmar Mountains and there were 11,500 of them in 1931, and probably some 13,000 now. They are both shy and friendly, an attractive people, cultivating their desolate and lonely hills with axe and fire; their life and customs have been fully described by Grigson.

The Bison-horn Maria, a great tribe of some 175,000 persons, live south [162] of the Indrawati in the Dantewara, Konta, Jagdalpur and Bijapur Tahsils and in the Sukma Zamindari. Grigson has studied them in less detail than the Hill Maria.[1] They have very little contact with the Muria of the north, except that they meet parties of them coming down from the Chota Dongar and Mardapal Parganas to dance at the great Marhai at Ghotpal. Their characteristic dance is the marriage dance with a splendid bison-horn headdress. A megalithic culture survives among them, and there are traces of a ghotul system long since moribund.

[1] A detailed study of one aspect of their life will be found in my *Maria Murder and Suicide* (Bombay, 1943); some of their folk-tales are given in my *Folk-Tales of Mahakoshal* (Bombay, 1944).

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
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APPENDIX ONE

** Mohpal	..	AB	10	9
* Salebhat	..	AB	12	9
* Sargipal	..	AB	7	8
Umradah	..	..	7	3
Upermurmend		..	11	9

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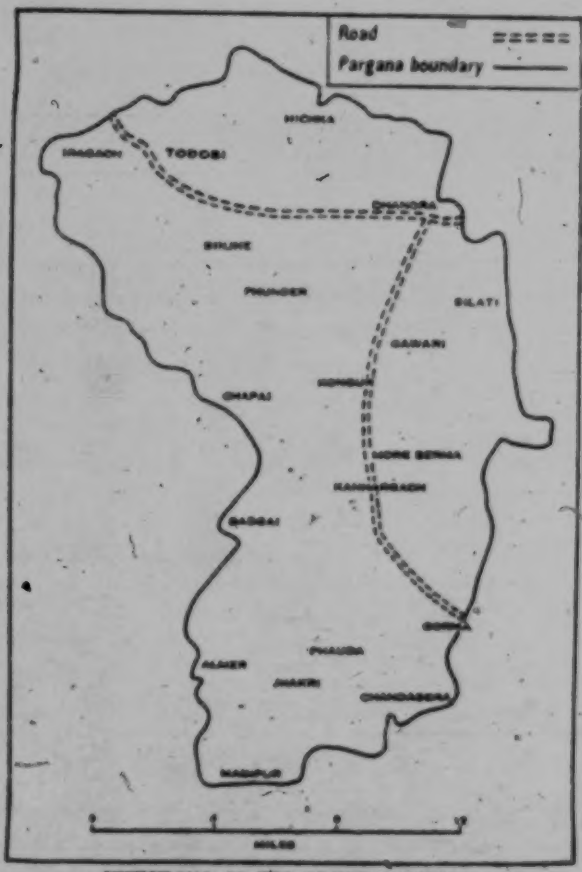
Konqur Pargana

This delightful pargana contains some of the most characteristic ghotul in the State. It lies between Bara Dongar to the east and the Bara Jhorian, Kolur, Baragaon and Bensur Parganas to the west. As you move across it you leave



SKETCH-MAP OF THE KONGUR PARGANA

typical Kondagaon villages where the Chait Dandar is danced and the boys have little decoration, and come to as typical Jhoria villages, where the Lingo legend